

NFAC 2782-79

25 May 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

VIA : Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment

FROM :
Senior Review Panel

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SUBJECT : White House Briefing on SALT II

1. Action Requested: None; for information only.

2. On 22 May 1979, I attended a luncheon and briefing at the White House on SALT II at the invitation of Anne Wexler. Attending were about 100 men and women from different backgrounds, including former State and Defense officials, business executives, industrialists, clergymen, educators, leaders of patriotic organizations, retired military, and the like. (Examples-- Messrs. Packard, Rush, Ailes, and Pace, Ambassador Lodge, Admirals Moorer, Burke, and Raborn, Generals Decker, Walt, and Cushman, Chairman of the Board for General Motors and for J.C. Penney.) The Deputy Director, ACDA and the DoD Arms Control representative were also present.

3. After lunch the briefing was conducted by Mr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, who presented a historical overview, to include SALT I; the negotiating history of SALT II; an explanation of the Treaty, protocol, and statement of principles for SALT III; a discussion of the verification problem; and expanded on the reasons why SALT II should be ratified. The briefing and following question period lasted about one hour.

a. His theme was that strategic arms limitation was the central issue of US foreign policy, deeply rooted in US-Soviet relations. He stated that SALT II met the four main US negotiating objectives, namely (1) cap the offensive strategic nuclear arms race; (2) seek equal aggregates in delivery vehicles by end 1981; (3) impose some qualitative limitations; and (4) achieve the first agreed reduction in numbers of vehicles.

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b. With respect to verification, he admitted that several months might elapse before we discovered any Soviet violations, but that this was not significant, because it was "totally impossible" for the Soviets to achieve any strategic advantage either for (1) political blackmail purposes, or (2) actual war-fighting capability.

c. He stressed that SALT II enhances strategic stability, predictability, and equality with respect to the two nuclear super powers; that with SALT II, neither side will be able to blackmail the other; and that the agreement will give the United States a measure of confidence in determining what strategic nuclear forces the Soviet Union will possess in 1985. He noted that it would end neither the arms race nor political competition, and that's why we need SALT III.

d. In the question period, he discussed the relationship of the aborted Vladivostok agreement and SALT II, the rationale behind the qualitative limitations, and the telemetry encryption problem. In response to one question, he indicated that any proposed changes or amendments to any part of the agreement would not be acceptable to the Soviets.

e. It was a forceful, no-nonsense presentation.

4. The President then joined the group and took the podium, speaking for about 20 minutes and then fielding questions. The session lasted about one hour. In the first 5 minutes, the press and TV networks were present.

a. The President dwelled on his firm belief that SALT II was a good agreement that was not only in the best interests of the United States and the Soviet Union, but also the whole world. He discussed SALT in the context of arms control negotiations across the whole spectrum of conflict and stressed the relationship between SALT and nonproliferation of nuclear weapons. He stated his pride in the success of his nonproliferation policy, pointing out that in the absence of such a policy, ten to twelve nations, including South Africa, might now be nuclear powers or on the verge of becoming one. Pakistan and India were also cited as specific examples of positive American nonproliferation policy actions.

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b. He painted the dire consequences of rejection of the agreement, declaring that it would "weaken the whole fabric of the Free World" and force an accommodation with the East, and give the Soviet Union an enormous propaganda advantage as a peace-loving nation.

c. Pointing out the agreement was not negotiated in a vacuum, he described the close and constant consultation that has gone on with the Congress, State, and Defense. He also emphasized that SALT II had the support of the JCS and that all our allies were in favor of it. The outcome of the issue in the United States, however, was in doubt, he noted, and he therefore needed our help, hoping that we would play a dynamic, active role in "accurately acquainting" the people in general and the US Senate in particular.

d. Most of the question period focused on verification, reaction in the Senate, and his coming Summit with Brezhnev.

e. On verification, the President stated that the "experts" were "absolutely convinced" that there was "no way" that the Soviets could cheat and get away with it. He said he will consult with Brezhnev on the use of third country territory for verification purposes and discussed some of the implications.

f. Some Senators, he said, were out of date and were not fully informed on the details of the agreement, while others simply did not trust the Russians. He could not predict the outcome of the Senate debate, stating that amendments to the Treaty or protocol would be tantamount to rejection, as the whole agreement would have to be renegotiated. He added, however, that a change in the principles for SALT III might be accepted.

g. His reiterated theme was that the moral, peaceful United States, the champion of human rights, will prevail in any competition with the Soviet Union, and that morally, religiously, and spiritually we were obviously superior to the Soviets.

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h. On the question of who was number one militarily, he quoted the JCS as stating we were number one now, but the long term balance was worrisome. He sketched US and Soviet military forces, bringing out some of the asymmetries and special Soviet problems such as China and the reliability of their Warsaw Pact allies. He stated that we can outperform the Soviet Union in an arms race, but that it was unnecessary.

i. He ended up with a brief discussion of his forthcoming Summit with Brehznev, stating that he intended to take up conventional arms control, to include MBFR and arms trade limitations in Africa, and control of antisatellite systems.

j. The President was articulate, and his sincerity and spirited manner was impressive.

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